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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee amends Navajo Nation Wireless Device Service Policies

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education and Human Services Committee approved Legislation No. 0281-17, which amends the Navajo Nation’s Wireless Device Service Policies and Procedures that were proposed by the Navajo Nation Telecommunications and Utilities Department, which is housed under the Division of General Services and is tasked with providing “access to essential telecommunications and utility service for the Navajo Nation government.”

The intent of the amendments proposed by the NNTU are to improve inventory, require that wireless devices be received and issued solely by the NNTU, require that oversight and management of wireless billing will be carried out by the NNTU to improve tracking and accountability, and to increase regulation of data usage on wireless devices issued by the Nation.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í) said the policy should prohibit employees from utilizing the Nation’s wireless devices as a means to harass other employees or non-employees, or sending lewd content.

“I see there is a provision that protects employees from harassment as well as a protocol they must follow to report it, but are there provisions that prohibit and punish users utilizing their wireless devices as a means to harass other individuals? I think that is important to add to the policy to make employees aware of respectable conduct,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty added that there also needs to be stronger regulations to disallow the downloading and purchasing of ringtones, games, pictures, and other non-work related content on wireless devices issued by the Navajo Nation.

In agreement, HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that many positions on the Navajo Nation do not require a smart phone, or touch screen devices that allow for email, media applications, and other content.

“With these programs, maybe we should just identify specifically which areas should use flip-phones. When you have the smart phone, they have access to a lot of stuff that can interfere with

productivity. If you want to check your email, then you go back to your work computer or laptop. We can just go back to that and keep it simple. The more you have smartphones, the more complex it gets,” said Delegate Hale.

Delegate Hale recommended a directive to the NNTU to conduct a cost analysis that compares the usage of smart phones and non-smart phones by Navajo Nation programs, and to propose cost saving measures to the committee at a later date.

NNTU is also directed to identify and propose improved tracking and information of the wireless devices, issuing phones with the name, title, and department of the employee, and developing additional proposed amendments to the wireless device policy to improve accountability.

HEHSC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0281-17, with one amendment and one directive. The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

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